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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
DODE-00 ACDA-12 SSM-03 /099 W
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P 261226Z DEC 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 158
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS EG
SUBJ: PM'S ARAB ADVISOR DISCUSSES SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVES

1. IN A DECEMBER 23 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISOR ON ARAB AFFAIRS, MOSHE SHARON, MADE CLEAR THAT HE REMAINS WARY OF THE UNDERLYING REASONS FOR SADAT'S INITIATIVES WITH ISRAEL. IN SHARON'S VIEW, SADAT IS TOO SHREWD AND CALCULATING TO HAVE ACTED ON IMPULSE, AND THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS RECENT ACTIONS IS SO GREAT THAT MOST EXPLANATIONS OFFERED (IMPATIENCE WITH THE US, BLOCKAGE OF THE GENEVA TRACK, IMPENDING ECONOMIC COLLAPSE) ARE LESS THAN FULLY SATISFYING.

2. SHARON BELIEVES THAT WHAT REALLY LED SADAT TO HIS RECENT INITIATIVES WAS HIS PERCEPTION OF THE GROWING
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SOVIET THREAT. ALTHOUGH SOVIETOLOGISTS ELSEWHERE ARE ABLE TO TAKE A REASONED VIEW OF REGIONAL RIVALRIES BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS, SHARON SAID, "WE ORIENTALISTS"THINK THAT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE FACT OF SUPERPOWER BALANCE IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF SOVIET DESIGNS. SADAT PERCEIVES A PATTERN OF RUSSIAN AC-

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TIVITIES IN ANGOLA, ZAIRE, ETHIOPIA, LIBYA, AND
SUDAN AND MAY CONCEIVABLY HAVE LEARNED OF A DIRECT
AND IMPENDING SOVIET EFFORT TO UNDERMINE HIM IN
EGYPT. SUCH A DANGEROUS WEB OF THREATS WOULD, IN
SHARON'S OPINION, HAVE GONE FAR IN IMPELLING SADAT
TO CHANGE THE MIDDLE EAST SCENE AS DRASTICALLY AS
HE HAS, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS RELATIONS IN
THE ARAB WORLD.

3. SHARON WAS OBVIOUSLY SKEPTICAL OF SADAT'S SUPPOSED
DESIRE FOR PEACE WITH ISRAEL. THIS IS A MAN WHO
HATES JEWS, WHO SIX MONTHS AGO WAS MAKING ANTI-SEMITIC
REMARKS IN THE UNITED STATES (SAYING HE WAS NOT
ABLE TO BUY A RADIO YEARS AGO, WHEN JEWS KEPT THE PRICES
TOO HIGH), WHO HAD GREAT ADMIRATION FOR THE NAZIS,
NEVERTHELESS, FOR SUCH A MAN WHO IS A DEVOUT MOSLEM,
SO DRAMATIC A GESTURE TOWARDS THE ENEMY IS POSSIBLE
AND NOT UNPRECEDENTED--SALADIN, WHOSE NAME SADAT HAD
EVOKED, HAD GONE TO THE TENT OF RICHARD THE LION
HEARTED. SHARON WAS NOT YET SURE WHETHER SADAT
WOULD MAKE A COMPROMISE COMPROMISE PEACE WITH ISRAEL, BUT THIS
WOULD SOON BECOME CLEAR. IF ISRAEL AND EGYPT DO NOT COME
TO AN AGREEMENT, SHARON SAW THAT SADAT'S ONLY OPTION WOULD
BE TO START A WAR QUICKLY-- "WITHIN TWO WEEKS".

4. DURING THE CONVERSATION, SHARON WAVED SEVERAL
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FOLDERS ABOUT. ONE APPEARED TO CONTAIN A PAPER OF
SOME THIRTY SHEETS DETAILING HIS THESIS. A SECOND
WAS FULL OF COPIED ARTICLES FROM AMERICAN
MAGAZINES ON SUBJECTS RELATED TO US-USSR RELATIVE
MILITARY STRENGTH (INCLUDING ONE BY MELVAN
LAIRD). STILL ANOTHER, FROM WHICH HE READ WITH AMUSE-
MENT, WAS A PROSPECTUS FROM AN ISRAELI MANUFACTURER
OF MENS UNDERWEAR; THE COMPANY HAS PLANS FOR SETTING
UP A FIFTEEN MILLION DOLLAR PER YEAR PLANT IN EGYPT.
THERE ARE LOTS OF ISRAELI COMPANIES SIMILARLY INTERESTED,
SHARON ADDED.

5. COMMENT: IN A CONVERSATION SEVERAL MONTHS
AGO, SHARON ALSO WAS MUCH TAKEN WITH THE IDEA THAT
THE SOVIETS ARE PLANNING TO GET CONTROL OF THE WEST'S
LIFELINE BY ESTABLISHING DOMINANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN,
AND HE MENTIONED A BOOK BY ADMIRAL GORSCHKOV SPELLING
OUT SOVIET DESIGNS. HE NOW HAS CONNECTED THIS THEME TO
SADAT'S MOVES. WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE
WHETHER IT IS MORE THAN AN INTERESTING (OR COCKEYED)
THEORY, BUT FIND HIS ABIDING SUSPICIONS OF SADAT
NOTEWORTHY, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF HIS POSITION

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IN BEGIN'S OFFICE. INCIDENTALLY, SHARON IS REPUTED TO BE A BRILLIANT SCHOLAR OF ISLAMIC HISTORY. HE WAS IN THE RECEIVING LINE TO GREET SADAT AT BEN-GURION AIRPORT.

6. AN INDICATION BOTH OF HOW SERIOUSLY SHARON TAKES HIS THEORY AND PERHAPS OF HIS ABILITY TO PER-SUADE OTHERS OF ITS CORRECTNESS WAS THE FACT THAT BENJAMIN GUR-ARYEH, HIS CO-ADVISOR ON ARAB AFFAIRS AND OVER WHOSE HEAD HE WAS APPOINTED BY BEGIN, WAS OBVIOUSLY COMFORTABLE WITH THE WHOLE SET OF IDEAS SHARON WAS EXPOUNDING. IN PREVIOUS MEETINGS, SHARON AND GUR-ARYEH HAD NOT GIVEN EVIDENCE OF HAVING ESTABLISHED A SATISFACTORY WORKING RELATIONSHIP. LEWIS
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